

VAIN REPETITIONS.

BY
CARDINAL NEWMAN

From The Rambler, Vol. IV, No. XXI
September, 1855

ST. LOUIS, MO., 1910
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J. A. CONNOLLY, V. G.

VAIN REPETITIONS

An old woman, rather dirty, mumbling over her beads,—a respectable gentleman, of ancient lineage and no brains, reading like a machine out of a book, — a stern spinster, slightly cracked, fasting till her head is turned with hunger, and then imagining herself in an ecstasy,—a gloomy-featured priest, bowing and genuflecting before an altar, and making all sorts of movements with his hands,—add to these a small crowd of Irish kneeling before a particularly ugly little image, crossing themselves violently, splashing holy water about them, holding lighted tapers, and groaning outwardly as well as inwardly,—these are the standard types of Catholic devotion, as accepted by the average class of our excellent

fellow-countrymen. Grant what they may, in their most tolerant moods, in respect to our sincerity, our zeal, our learning, our cleverness, and the antiquity of our ritual, here at least they consider that the case stands clearly in favour of Protestantism. Theirs is the *spiritual* religion, they consider; and they undoubtedly pray to God with the spirit and from the heart. Our worship may be more grand, more artistic, more imaginative, more adapted to enlist the senses in the service of religion; but when it comes to downright prayer, the result of the comparison is wholly to their advantage. This point, they hold, may be fairly assumed: it is, in fact, indisputable. Nobody *can* say that the Liturgy of the Church of England, or the extemporaneous productions of the Dissenting ministers are

unspiritual, sensuous, or open to the charge of being "vain repetitions." If Protestants, they repeat, are not always a match for Papists in the way of argument, at any rate they know how to pray to God; and, after all, that is everything.

Those among them who think, who try to systematise their opinions, and like to be able to give an intelligible account of their views, describe the prevailing ideas of Catholics as to prayer much in the following way: They suppose that it is a part of our religion to regard certain outward acts and words as possessing a certain inherent virtue and power, in return for which the sinner is to be saved. They regard *forms* as the very essential characteristic of "Romish" devotion. Sometimes in one shape, and sometimes in another, they

hold that with us something is *substituted* for the direct and invisible intercourse between the individual soul and its God. Quantity, they fancy, is considered in the place of quality; and the question is not, what sort of prayer a man offers to God, but how much of it; and it is all the same whether he prays himself, or gets others to do it for him. The grand vicarious prayer-manufacturer is, of course, the priest; and his chief stock-in-trade consists in those extraordinary, incomprehensible, superstitious things, called Masses. *What* these Masses are, most Protestants trouble themselves very little to inquire. The common notion is, that every Catholic who wears a surplice is a priest; that whenever a priest does anything in a church he is saying Mass; and that the whole of Mass

consists in what is commonly described as "the adoration of the Host." In Masses, then, the priest deals, and deals largely; and when a Catholic is at all anxious to go to heaven, what he does is to buy extensively of these Masses; and having so purchased, he is satisfied that all is quite right; it is the priest's business to save him; the responsibility is off his own shoulders; he has bought his Masses, and paid for them, and henceforth he may live and die content.

When, however, Catholics are not satisfied with purchasing sacerdotal salvation, but want to have a share in the work themselves, it is supposed that the recognised thing is to say over plenty of prayers, composed, of course, by priests; and if in Latin, so much the better. The great thing is, plenty

of them; and they will be the more efficacious, if there is a large infusion of hyperbolical addresses to the Blessed Virgin and the Saints. They should be said, of course, kneeling; because kneeling implies that prostration of the intellect, not before God, but before the priests, which is so important an element in "Romish" devotion. How they are said, matters little or nothing. The task has to be got through with the lips; and when got through, that prayer has really been offered to God, which is to be the means of atoning for all sins—great and little—with the proviso, it is understood, of absolution (usually paid for) from the priest.

This perfunctory style of devotion, of course, appears in its most truly Popish form in such things as the

Rosary, or any other prayers in which the same set form of words is repeated over and over again, as the Protestant would say, *usque ad nauseam*. "If these are not vain repetitions," he asks triumphantly, "I should like to know what are? One hundred and fifty *Ave Marias*, and the Lord's Prayer and *Gloria Patri* each of them fifteen times over! What irrational folly! What a mockery of that God, who tells us to worship Him in spirit and in truth! 'Hail, Mary, full of grace,' etc., one hundred and fifty times over! It is bad enough only once; but one hundred and fifty times! Why, my dear sir," continues the Bible Christian, "it's a downright insult to the Deity. And how it is said, too! Gabble, gabble, gabble, as hard as ever the lips can move and mumble! What a contrast

to the solemnity and seriousness of our truly scriptural Liturgy, read aloud solemnly, slowly, and distinctly by a duly-ordained minister, in a fair white surplice and a master-of-arts university hood! I really wonder that your learned men, and bishops, and Catholic nobility and gentry are not ashamed of it. Why, sir, its absolute heathenism. Then look at the things one sees in foreign churches. Look at Loretto, for instance. There's an image of the Virgin; ugly enough to be sure; but let that pass. But there it is, fit only, in *my* judgment, for Rag Fair, or Holywell Street, with dozens and dozens of candles burning before it—(what a waste of good wax, by the way!)—and there is a priest lighting more and more, muttering away as fast as he does it for the poor creatures

who pay for these candles; but evidently—yes, quite evidently—not caring a straw for the whole thing, and treating it as a ridiculous but profitable mummary. Once more I say, thank God I am an Englishman; and I enjoy the purity and solemnity of our truly spiritual Liturgy all the more for seeing the follies these Papists palm off upon the world as true devotion.”

Let us inquire, then, what is the real worth of these popular objections to Catholic practice. A brief investigation of the comparative liabilities of Catholicism and Protestantism to the charge of fostering “vain repetitions” will be a not unsuitable pendant to the remarks we recently offered our readers on the subject of Priestcraft. Investigation, moreover, furnishes a similar result in both cases. Our ac-

users are themselves guilty of the very fault they impute to us; and from the same cause, namely, from their estimating the effects of certain special practices amongst us by the effects which similar practices would produce amongst them, and their overlooking those fundamental principles which lie at the root of our discipline and our devotions. In conducting such an inquiry we most sincerely assure those who are not Catholics, that we dislike and reprobate the mere "*Tu quoque*" style of reply to the full as much as they can do; and that we are very far from wishing to excuse ourselves by accusing them. We are not bidding them cast the beam out of their eyes, before they presume to take the mote out of ours. We are not re-criminating upon them at all. We are

rather agreeing with them in certain fundamental ideas on the subject of religious worship, and calling their attention to the fact, that those ideas are really acted upon and thoroughly carried out by us, in those very instances in which, to the superficial non-Catholic observer, we appear to be most flagrantly violating them. If we retort the charge upon them, it is with the "retort courteous" in intention, however freely it may be accompanied with a laugh at the occasionally ludicrous aspect which Protestantism puts on. And in case it should be any satisfaction to them to know it, we may add, that we Catholics are equally ready to detect the ludicrous in the proceedings of one another, when any of us fall into laughable exaggerations and external absurdities. They are

quite welcome to laugh at us, if only they will laugh at what is really laughable, and attempt in good earnest to understand the true nature of what *seems* ridiculous to them. What we complain of in Protestant ridicule is, that it is bitter without being merry. Let it be as merry as it likes, if only it is serious withal. The two are perfectly compatible. They are not often found united in any high degree, it is true; but they are so sometimes; and we are far indeed from wishing to see every Protestant critic with a sour face and a solemn brow. If we make ourselves absurd in any way, by all means let them laugh at us; only let them be 'sure that they understand what they make a joke of, lest by chance they convert the operations of the Spirit of God into the subject of an angry sneer or a heedless jest.

Prayer, then, we are all agreed, consists in the intercourse between the intelligent soul and Almighty God. It is essentially an act of the mind, and not of the body: except so far as the body supplies the organ by which the words of spoken prayers are framed. Words alone do not constitute prayer, nor are they necessary to prayer, which may exist without the intervention of any human language at all. And words without the direct action of the soul, speaking through them, are not prayer at all, but "vain repetitions." If Protestants imagine that Catholics believe that words uttered by the lips, and not accompanied by the actual aspirations of the heart to God, can possibly be acceptable as prayer, we have only to request them to put the question to any Catholic of any class or any coun-

try, and they will speedily be undeceived. Such a notion was never heard of in the Church. When Catholics are guilty of these "vain repetitions," they are not praying; and they know they are not praying. You must pray from the heart, or you cannot pray at all.

Prayer, then, being the intercourse of the individual soul with God, and being essentially a spiritual act, words are not *necessary* to its existence. Though we cannot communicate with our fellow-creatures except through the organs of the body, we can communicate with God without putting our ideas into any particular phrases of human language. If we use language at all, it is in order to vivify our feelings, and give distinctness to our ideas; or in order to enable several persons to pray together, at the time,

for us; it is only useful and desirable. The particular manner, therefore, in which the soul employs human language in prayer, is a thing to be determined by practical experience of and for the same special objects. Human language is not necessary for God to hear prayer, nor is it necessary even for us; it is only useful and desirable. The particular manner, therefore, in which the soul employs human language in prayer, is a thing to be determined by practical experience of the capacities of the human understanding. We could not know beforehand whether the use of language would ever be desirable; nor could we know for certain, on the other hand, that the spiritual intelligence could communicate with God altogether without language. But we know now

that the soul is capable of praying in various ways; it can pray in actual words, and these words it can utter aloud; or it can merely repeat them in silence, not even forming each separate word to itself. Besides this, it can send up aspirations without putting them into any species of language whatsoever. It can love, desire, grieve, give thanks, and express hope and confidence, by the mere action of its own purely spiritual powers.

But, further,—and this is the point which especially bears on the subject we are discussing,—it can form with the mouth, either silently or aloud, a series of phrases in some human language, of whose particular and grammatical import it is ignorant, or to which it pays no particular attention; and while doing this, it can pray fer-

vently in its own spiritual depths; finding in the corporal formation of the words it repeats, not a hindrance, but a very powerful aid to the expression of its desires and its feelings. And this is the one great point of distinction between Catholics and Protestants on the subject of prayer. The latter cannot conceive that such a repetition of mere words can by any possibility be real prayers. When they themselves pray, or try to pray, they invariably clothe their ideas in words grammatically expressive of those ideas; and unless they are able to do this, they scarcely venture to think they are praying at all. With all their loud assertions that prayer is an act of the heart, and it is by the influence of the Holy Ghost alone that the soul can pray, in practice they are perpet-

ually converting prayer into an act of the intellect, and making the intercourse between God and the soul depend upon the capacity of the understanding. We do not say that they *never* recognise the possibility of any other sort of genuine prayer; but it is quite certain that both in theory, and as exemplified in practice, their idea of prayer is, that it is the intercourse of the heart with God, *conducted through the medium of human language*.

We, on the contrary, recognise in human language *a* medium of prayer, but not *the* medium. We hold that the soul is, not only at rare intervals, but perpetually, disembarassing herself of the apparatus of words, and, so to say, annihilating herself in a mystic union with the Holy Ghost, approach-

ing the Fountain of all gifts with aspirations unutterable. Jesus Christ, our Head, prays in us and with us by the Spirit which He has given us. The soul stands before her God as a beggar stands before a king, and contents herself with only looking at Him; and that look is her prayer, for it is the look of faith, love, hope, desire, humility and penitence. What if she cannot frame earthly words to express her longings? It is the Holy Spirit that has taught her thus to stand and beg; He Himself is her prayer; and her requests are known to God, and infallibly granted. "We know not," St. Paul teaches us, "what we should pray for as we ought; but the Spirit Himself asketh for us with unutterable groanings. And He that searcheth the hearts, knoweth what the Spirit

desireth; because He asketh for the saints according to God." * * This, then, is the explanation we give to those who are astounded at hearing dozens and scores of Hail Marys and Our Fathers rapidly uttered in succession, and described as prayer. We not only justify the practice, but we assert that prayer of this species is often the very highest and most purely spiritual communion which the soul can hold with her God. The attitude in which she thus places herself is pre-eminently calculated to deepen her sense of her own nothingness, of the omnipotence of Divine grace, and of the boundless love and goodness of Him in whose presence she stands. Strange as it may appear to the non-Catholic mind, it is yet true, that while the lips are thus uttering a series of what appear "vain

repetitions," the spirit within is often making the nearest approach that is possible in this life to that perfect adoration of the Almighty God which will be the great privilege of the Beatific Vision. Nay, still more, incredulously as the statement may be received, it is nevertheless certain that that very eager haste, that almost breathless urgency, with which at times the devout Catholic pours forth a perfect tide of these innumerable repetitions, is an actual token of the fervour of the spiritual desire with which his soul is adoring and praying. That rapid utterance, which to the unenlightened appears a senseless gabble, is the very symptom of the intensity of the fire with which the soul is burning within. She cannot stay, nor rest; so earnest is her desire for

the graces she implores, so overwhelming is her sense of the love and power of Jesus Christ, that the throes of her spirit find a positive relief in these words, which stream forth from her lips, and so startle the unwise and ignorant.

Undoubtedly, as a matter of fact, many and many an Our Father and Hail Mary are really "gabbled," or turned into a "vain repetition"; but this is the same with every species of vocal prayer. All Catholics are not religious and devout, and good Catholics are subject to temptations to inattention in prayer, as to all other temptations. But they are not *more* likely to worship God with their lips when only reciting a string of Latin Pater Nosters, than when reciting the most judiciously expressed English devotions.

Will any candid Protestant pretend that the efficacy and desirableness of the usual forms of Protestant devotion are to be estimated by the attention and fervour with which they are appropriated by the average class of attendants in a Protestant church? If he will abide by such a test, all we ask is, that he shall fairly apply it. Let him enter any chance half-dozen Catholic churches or chapels during Mass any Sunday or week-day, and note the apparent attention of the congregation, and the extent to which they are engaged—nay, absorbed—in their devotions; and let him then compare what he has thus witnessed with the personal attention displayed by any similar classes of people in any chance half-dozen Protestant places of worship. We do not think he will wish to apply the test a second time.

Why, then, is it, that intelligent Protestants so invariably fail to appreciate the true nature of those Catholic devotions which they denounce as a senseless repetition of unintelligible words? Having, in the main, right ideas as to what prayer is, why do they remain so completely in the dark as to this particular mode of praying? The answer is plain: *they judge us by their own experience; and their experience is not that of men who possess the fullness of the graces which Jesus Christ gives to His children.* We speak of them, of course, as being to some degree under the influence of that same Holy Spirit who is the life of our prayers, and not as being utterly reprobate men of the world, who have already sold themselves, soul and body, for the sake of the enjoyments of this

life. Excluding, then, those with whom it is useless to reason on such a subject as this, Protestants may be divided into three classes. There are those who, having been validly baptised, and not having lost their baptismal privileges by mortal sin, are as truly Catholics as any one of us. There are those who have been validly baptised, but who have fallen into mortal sin, and have not recovered themselves; these are in the same condition as Catholics who are in mortal sin unrepented of, except that they have not the advantage of the external calls and aids to repentance which the Catholic Church bestows on her fallen children. And there are those who, having never been really baptised, are unregenerate; and know only those graces which the goodness of God bestows on the soul

in order to bring it to seek baptism and its attendant salvation.

Now, considering how utterly incapable the soul is, by nature, of praying to God, or believing in him; and considering the hidden and mysterious character of that regenerate life of which prayer is at once the occupation and the sustenance,—it is obvious that to the third of these three classes of persons the laws which govern the prayers of devout Christians must be practically incomprehensible. Even when they approach the subject in the most modest and candid spirit, it must be one which eludes their grasp and defies their analysis. Their own experience of the mysterious life of prayer is so defective and superficial, even at the best, that all they can reasonably do, is to confess their inability

to comprehend a thing of whose beauty and excellence they nevertheless can catch a few flickering rays. We might as well attempt to teach a little infant, just begining to creep upon the ground, to comprehend the flight of the eagle as it mounts upwards towards the blazing sun.

With the second class that we have named, the difficulty is not so great; but yet it is considerable. Baptism conferring on all who receive it the gift of Christian faith, and faith not being necessarily destroyed by mortal sin, the capacity of an unrepentant baptised Protestant for entering into subjects of this kind is in substance the same as that of bad Catholics. Faith has given him a capacity for knowing God, and accordingly he has the capacity for approaching God in prayer;

and having that capacity, he can intellectually comprehend the nature of prayer; he can analyse the operations of the soul in her devotional exercises, and not only respect what she does from mere modest veneration, but partially appreciate it from a distinct comprehension of its excellence.

Still, it is very difficult for a person in this condition to understand the operations of the soul in prayer. He is like a person almost blind or deaf, who fails to realize the true meaning and beauty of the lovely sights he sees or the sweet strains he hears. Even to a bad Catholic it is no easy matter to enter at all candidly into the mysteries of the spiritual life, viewed merely as a matter for the intellect. Take any Catholic, however intelligent, who is known to be in mortal sin, because he

avows it himself, and see how lamentably his mere understanding of the hidden life of the soul is dimmed and injured. Remind such a man that there are hundreds and thousands of nuns who are in the habit of daily reciting their office in Latin, without knowing a word of Latin as a language; and that yet they find this strange proceeding to be prayer of the most spiritual and advantageous kind. If such a man does not at once fling himself into the coarse slanders of the world, and laugh at the whole thing as self-deception and humbug, he will confess that he cannot conceive how these good women can like such an extraordinary occupation, how they can keep their minds from incessant wandering, or how it can be productive of any benefit to their souls.

And if the question is so easily darkened in the judgment of an irreligious Catholic, with all the advantages he has had in the way of experience, the living tradition of the Church, and in an exact theological education, how much more obscure must it be to those who have nothing more than Protestant Dissent, or even the Established Church of England, can give them. If a godless Catholic is ready to sneer at the "unintellectual" follies of pious nuns, and the endless repetitions of the same prayers by devout people in general, can we wonder that men whose only theology is to be found in the thousand-and-one opinions of Anglicans, should explode in coarse laughter at the sight of an old woman counting her beads, especially if she is very ugly and very dirty,—for

with such people this is generally a serious aggravation of the offense?

The rationale of Protestant inability to enter into our prayers is equally simple in the case of those who are baptised, and who remain still in a state of grace. Whether there are any, or many such, who have grown up and come to intellectual maturity, we are not now discussing. For the sake of the argument we are supposing there are such, and that they are sufficiently numerous to be spoken of as a class by themselves. Granting, then,—and not only granting, but maintaining,—the utmost that can be said in favor of the gifts and privileges of a baptised person brought up a Protestant and preserving his baptismal innocence, it is impossible to doubt that his losses are nevertheless extremely se-

vere, and that they must tend to cloud the apprehension of his mind in all spiritual things. First of all, he has none of the sacramental aids which the Catholic possesses; he has not the grace of Confirmation; he has never received the most precious Body and Blood of Jesus Christ in the Holy Eucharist; and if he is married he has not the graces of the sacrament of marriage. Externally, he has been mixed up with a world in which religious error far exceeds religious truth.

Protestants have the Bible, it is true; but then, who reads the Bible? Not one Protestant out of a hundred, or one out of a thousand. They read its words, indeed, and sometimes learn parts of it by heart; but as to reading it independently for themselves, and trying without prejudice to make out its meaning in religious doctrine, that

is a very different thing, and requires a courage, and a real exercise of private judgment, of which few Protestants are capable. In Bible-reading, with scarcely an exception, they are the slaves of their own traditionalists.

Then as to their ways of practicing family and public prayer. Look at their family prayers, in the first place. We would not for a moment cast a slur on the practice itself, or pretend it is not in any way beneficial to those who adopt it. But we do say, that the *usual* mode of conducting it, both among Anglicans and Dissenters, is simply a caricature, and the very last thing to help the soul to enter into the mysteries of real spiritual intercourse with Almighty God. Protestant family devotion generally consists of one long prayer, either read out of a book

or uttered extemporaneously by one of the assemblage. Sometimes they read a chapter of the Bible, with or without some sort of comment. This reading of the Bible of course is good and an intelligible practice, and the only mischief is, that zealous Protestants usually contrive to misinterpret what they read with the most perverse ingenuity. The absurdity of this so-called family worship lies in the "prayer" itself. We say nothing of the flat, dull, pompous, unnatural, and tedious style of the compositions which are printed and published for the benefit of those who are too dull, or too modest, to extemporise devotions for others; and nothing of the coarse, or rambling, or irrevelant, or ludicrous character of those prayers which are the offspring of the moment. Let us

grant that in substance these prayers are all that can be desired; and, indeed, we have gladly remarked that Protestant prayers are usually much less heretical than Protestant sermons. The foolishness of the custom consists in this, that the listeners are expected to join with heart and understanding in a long-winded production, of which they know nothing beforehand; for if a book is used, only the person who reads it aloud has a copy before him. No wonder that so many people, when honest, confess that they find family prayer a most somniferous proceeding. On Catholic principles there might be a rational explanation of the practice, and a way for making it a really spiritual service. If they professed to do what we do at Mass; that is, let one person say one form of words, and all

the rest pray just as they pleased, merely joining with the speaker in spirit, there would be some sense in the matter. But as it is, these prayers are what Dr. Whately cleverly called them—oblique sermons. Viewed as prayers, they are simply “vain repetitions.” One man prays, and the rest kneel around and listen, here and there striving to appropriate his words and really *pray* themselves; but, on the whole, listening to prayer, and that is all. It is plain that this is not a means for instructing the well-intentioned Protestant in the mysteries of communion with God.

In the dissenting modes of public worship, the same absurdity prevails. They have sermons and hymns, which are bad or good, as the case may be, but as to prayer, it is all “oblique ser-

monising." A man gets up into a pulpit, puts on the peculiar dissenting physiognomy which is considered the right thing on such occasions, and proceeds to pray aloud with considerable emphasis and artificial fervour. His audience,—for they are nothing but an audience,—listens, criticises, and sometimes groans in approbation. Can we be surprised, with such notions of the worship of God, that Dissenters are no better than they are; and that persons of good taste, education, and intelligence, so seldom can tolerate their system, and forsake it for the more "genteel" religion of the English Establishment?

In that Establishment, we grant, things are far better; and it is to their more reasonable notions of public prayer that we in a great measure at-

tribute the more religious and orthodox character of "church people," as compared with the glaring heresy and slippery morals of the Baptists, Independents, and such like. Setting aside the XXXIX Articles, and a few other prominently heretical portions, the "Book of Common Prayer" is faulty rather by omissions than by commissions. It is in a great degree either taken from the Missal and Breviary, or modelled upon the same pattern. Apart from doctrinal defects, its characteristic differences from its Catholic originals are, first, its sameness, monotony, and clumsy structure; and secondly, its loss of that peculiarly scriptural character, which is so striking a feature in all the offices of the Catholic Church. The Anglican notion of teaching the people the Bible, is to have a

couple of chapters read aloud, generally with no possible connection with the season of the year. Their Gospels and Epistles are taken bodily from us, and are, accordingly, well chosen and appropriate. The Catholic system, on the other hand, is to impregnate every word of its offices with texts and passages from the Bible, chosen with a special regard both to their obvious and their mystical meaning, and to their bearing upon the various seasons of the Christian year. The result is, that while in the Establishment a few pieces of the Bible are dragged in, to take their chance of being understood, with us the force and meaning of Holy Writ is felt and appropriated in a manner of which we do not hesitate to say that the generality of the best Protestants have not the slightest conception.

Granting, however, every thing that can be said of the Anglican services, the great fact remains, that to a large number of those who hear them they are simply "vain repetitions." The fundamental error of the Protestant theory of public worship ruins every thing. Its principle is, that everybody present is to use the same words in approaching Almighty God. A minister stands up in a conspicuous place, turns towards the people, and recites the prayers in a slow, solemn, rhetorical tone, the very opposite of that which is natural to the soul in prayer. Everybody is expected to listen, and to pray, not only in intention, but in the very same words, with the reader. The result is, an unmitigated *formalism*. Never mind what you are, who you are, what is your age, or condition, or

mood of mind, Protestantism will not let you pray to God in your own way, It has no notion of any communion of saints existing in the spirit and in the heart; its "communion of saints" is one *of the letter*; a verbal communion; a unanimity of intellect, and not a unity of soul; a conformity to the words of man, and not an obedience to the guidance of the Holy Ghost. If you cannot pray in fetters, you must not attend public worship; but at the same time, not to attend public worship is held to be a grievous scandal, and a token of shameless worldliness; so that the poor soul is in a hard strait. There is no despotism like that of a lawless mob; and so, there is no formalism like that of the sects who claim for themselves the special honor of being spiritual. They mock at us for

having public prayer in an unknown tongue, and for gabbling out Pater Nosters and Ave Marias; totally forgetting that prayer is an act of the heart and not of the lips, and that the soul can pray, whatever be the words uttered, provided she is taught by the Holy Ghost, and not hampered by the tyranny of her fellow-worshippers. And at the same time, they fall into the very selfsame error which they fancy they see in us, in requiring everybody to use identically the same forms, and in obedience to the leadership of one loud-voiced personage; they practically convert the majority of their "congregations" into "audiences," and what professes to be very good prayer turns out nothing but very bad sermonising.

Brought up, accordingly, in a system like this, we cannot wonder that

well-disposed Protestants cannot enter into our ways of prayer and meditation. People accustomed to venerate the letter which kills, cannot comprehend the operations of the Spirit which gives life. Prayer, with a good Protestant, is generally *very hard work*. With the best intentions, it requires a very severe effort before he can detach his thoughts from secular subjects, and concentrate them on the unseen. That extravagantly solemn countenance which he usually puts on when at his devotions, or when speaking on religion, is really almost necessary to him, as a part of the ceremonial requisite for abstracting his mind from earthly trivialities. Unless he alters the condition of the muscles of his face, hides his eyes, and puts himself in some particular posture, the world will not let

him go, but holds him so tight that he cannot pray. We do not blame him for all this, of course. If he cannot pray without it, by all means let him adopt every device, however quaint and unnatural, which will help him to realise eternal things, and to master his wandering affections. Only, let him not set himself up as a paragon of spirituality, and pharisaically scorn those who can do without his formalities, and with whom a spiritual intercourse with God is so easy, that in a moment they can forget all that is around them, and be absorbed in prayer, even while their lips are reciting a string of Pater Nosters, and the voice of the priest singing in Latin is sounding in their bodily ears.



